

attention from beginning to end. The one act version which we usually see is perhaps better, chiefly because its quality is less diluted.

"Giselle" The third of the standard repertoire which they produced here was arranged during the war when most of their men were away in service, and since it has still not been restaged, the lack of men on stage in the group numbers seems to throw the whole thing off balance somehow. Some of their staging is ingenious and much of it is praiseworthy, but to my mind, Ballet Theatre presents a much better all-around production of "Giselle." Of course, in "Giselle as in no other ballet the ballerina is the show, and Saddler's Wells is very fortunate in having Margot Fonteyn and Moira Shearer, both of whom are wonderful.

In modern works, Saddler's Wells is less fortunate. Frederic Ashton contributed "Les Patineurs", "Falcade", "Wedding Bouquet", and "Dante Sonata" while Ninette de Valois was represented by "Checkmate", and "Don Quixote". Of this group "Les Patineurs" is probably the best; good music well used, sound and ingenious choreography, and good dancing. Ballet Theatre also does this ballet, but I must say the British do it better, perhaps because it was made for them. "Falcade" is a frothy and cheerfully satiric set of sketches, and "Wedding Bouquet" is similarly comic and preposterous. The verses of Gertrude Stein, read from the sideline, add novelty and sometimes point to the proceedings, but I think "Falcade" will last longer. "Dante Sonata" is a serious work by Ashton which tries to hard to be emotional philosophical, religious, mystic, and/or several other things. I thought it forced and unbelievable and soon found myself unable to take it seriously. The groupings were generally good, the steps and poses often excellent, but whatever Ashton was trying to say has been said long ago and better by Martha Graham and Leonide Massine.

Ninette de Valois is the very astute director of the company and a choreographer of some talent. "Checkmate" with its parallels between humans and chess pieces was interesting though a bit long. "Don Quixote" was the worst ballet I've seen in years. Contrived, dull, improbable and uninspired, it could not be saved even by Margot Fonteyn as Dulcinea. Miss de Valois's "The Rake's Progress", seen last year, was shorter and much better.

Naturally the chief interest was centered on the dancers, especially the ballerinas. Margot Fonteyn received most of the advance publicity, and Moira Shearer is known to millions for her work in "The Red Shoes". There has been endless discussion over which was better than whom, and with no result. They're both good, it's just that they're different, and a person will naturally prefer whichever ballerina interprets according to his taste. They're both beautiful, technically strong, and blessed with theatrical flair. Fonteyn is more experienced, simpler neater in dancing (but barely), and more conscientiously musical. Shearer is more elegant and much of her interpretation I find preferable to Fonteyn's. With a few years more experience she should equal and perhaps even surpass Fonteyn.

The third ballerina is Beryl Grey who possesses a quality of movement which might best be called "marsh-mallowy" for its wonderful smoothness and sweetness. She is marvelous as the Lilac Fairy in "The Sleeping Beauty" and as Myrtha, queen of the Wilis in "Giselle" she's hardly stimulating enough, though, for the role of Princess Aurora: she needs to add a little sharpness and spice. Her best change of pace is in "Checkmate" where she makes a juicily vicious Black Queen.

Violetta Elvin appeared in little except the "Blue-

bird pas de deux" where she hardly showed to full advantage.

The men do not show up as well as the women, perhaps because of the female dominance of direction and teaching. Michael Somes, their leading classic dancer has an icy elegance and a neat technique, but no warmth and less stage personality than one would expect. Alexis Rassiné has good feet and legs and is quite supple, but he is entirely too squirmy for a man. Alexander Grant is an excellent character dancer. Brian Shaw is very exciting on stage, mostly because you expect him to fall on his face any minute. Apparently he dances on sheer nerve, muscle, and luck. I never saw so much off-balance, unscientific, and yet brilliant dancing in one ballet. In the corps the most noticeable boys were Philip Chatfield for his elegance and strong stage presence and Kenneth Macmillan whose feet and legs are incredibly flexible and well trained; when he matures a bit he may really be terrific. Among the girls I especially noticed Rowena Jackson, who turns faster than any other human being, and Mary Drage, whose beautiful face is "such stuff as dreams are made on."

In conclusion I must say that I consider Saddler's Wells a great ballet company. The lack of authoritative male dancers and of good modern choreographers does not stop them from giving a wonderful show.

Their brilliance and glamor will always be welcome. Nevertheless, if Ballet Theatre only had the money to do such expensive productions as "Sleeping Beauty" we would really see something. Let us not forget that while Saddler's Wells may do magnificent restorations, our own Ballet Theatre is more vital and creative and probably the world's best at contemporary ballets.

#### HASSIDIM SCORE AT HANNUKKAH FETE



Synthetic Hassidim back stage. A group of 12 dancers with four such candelabras and a crowned "Torah" were in the Hassidic "Simkhat Torah" dance which "brought down the house". Picture by Jack Tygett.

On Dec. 10th, the Chicago Civic Opera House was again the scene of the Gigantic Zionist pageant held annually in commemoration of Hannukkah, the country to participate in the program.

The evening was divided into two parts. The first part considered of a musical concert sung by an excellent choir under the direction of Erwin Jospe, an outstanding musician. Richard Tucker, whose brilliant voice enchanted the listeners was the soloist in the concert section and also during the pageant. The ritual of the lighting the Menorah with the soul-stirring cantorial melodies, sung by Mr. Tucker and the choir, took

place during the first part. On a whole, the concert part was by far more interesting than was last year's.

The pageant, written by the witty Jewish scholar, Ben Aronin, portrayed the dedication ceremonies in Israel's Negev (Southern desert land) of a dam which was to make the parched Negev liveable. Dinah Halperin, a dynamic Jewish actress played the part of a Kvutzah leader, and introduced George Jessel, in the role of an American engineer who made the building of the dam possible. From then on Mr. Jessel tells the story of his parents and other Jews who escaped Russian pogroms and who came to settle in this country. It was a story of woe and lamentation — an oft told story of Jews being killed either by pogromchicks, Nazis, or in running blockades into Israel. There was too much of darkness and gloom. Scenes of bedraggled, woe begotten Jews being led to concentration incinerators, escaping pogroms or escaping other horrors. George Jessel was not the man to tell the story convincingly. He hurried his lines and his delivery was flatter than stale beer, especially after a dynamic tragedienne such as Dinah Halperin. It could be compared to the roaring of a lion (Dinah Halperin) after which came the raspy squeak of an indifferent mouse. Mr. Jessel might be America's No. 1 toastmaster, but the Civic Opera House not being a night club he was out of his field, way out and way off.

Richard Tucker was very good. His "Rakhet M'vakah Al Baneah" (Rachel bemoans her children) was especially excellent, as were all of his renditions which were majestic and expressive of the required mood. The above named number was also danced out in the proper mood by a group of girls, using their bodies to good advantage, expressing the deep grief the song called for portrayal.

There were two gay scenes in the pageant, scenes that delighted the eye and cheered the heart: the opening scene (up until Mr. Jessel took over) and the Hassidic "Simkhat Torah" scene, where a group of Hassidim expressed their solemn joy on the "Joyous Feast of the Torah". It brought down the house with an applause nothing short of the noise that must have caused the walls of Jericho to come tumbling down. The part of the Rabbi was taken by V. F. Beliajus, while the Hassidim, practically all gentile, consisted of the finest young Chicago dancers, who did an excellent job.

The pageant was produced by Isaac Van Grove, who is an old and able hand at producing grand things on a large scale. Joan Woodruff Van Grove was the "It" behind the scenes, an amazing little woman who is never at a loss and knows all the cues on the tips of her fingering furor. It was she who also choreographed the dancers and knows how to calm in the midst of nerve wreck of Lamentation and an Oriental dance of strong Turkish flavor, which ten girls danced, truly, to the credit of Miss Woodruff.

#### INTERNATIONAL NIGHT AT BOWEN HIGH

Bowen High School presented an International Night on December 15th. The program contained adagio dancers, choirs, solo singers as well as a Latin orchestra (members of the school) who played Sambas, Mambo, etc. quite well.

Of the folk groups the Serbian singing society "Sloboda", was the first to appear in a group of well trained singers who sang Serb folk songs. They were followed by the "Kosova" Tanbouritzas and while they played a group of girls danced the Malo, Drmes and Veliko kolos. The ATEITIS Lithuanian dancers have an established reputation of excellence and this reputation of excel-

lence and this reputation was in no way dented as they danced Dzuku, Mikita, Ziogelis, Voveraite and Kubilas.

The Norwegian "Leikaringen Heimhug" presented first three couples of children who danced the Six Hand Reel and followed by the adult group with the Gamla Reinlander and the Tre Karls Polska, a dance which always evokes a big hand. The Polish "Forget-Me-Not" dancers, early teen age girls trained by Emily Mucha, did the Polish Wegierka, Bialy Mazur, Elena Polka and Krakowiak, all dances of endurance which required plenty stamina. After this virile rendition so well done, the "Forget-me-not's" will not be forgotten too soon.

The faculty members closed the program with two square dances. The students present in the audience had a time of their life seeing their stern teachers "let their hair down and go to town". Every (most likely intended) mistake tickled them no end and the program ended in an elated mood.

#### LITHUANIAN CHRISTMAS PROGRAMS



ATEITIS members enacting Christmas customs on the stage of the Museum of Science and Industry.

(Museum Foto)

Lithuanian Christmas traditions and customs were capably portrayed in the Museum of Science and Industry's "Christmas Around the World" series in four programs which were presented Sunday, November 26, 1950, under direction of Mrs. Petras Dauzvardis, wife of the Consul of Lithuania.

The Knights of Lithuania Choir, directed by Leonard Simutis, Jr., the St. Casimir Academy dance ensemble, and children from St. George's Lithuanian Parochial school took part in the afternoon programs at 2 and 4 p.m. The Choir appeared in two groups of songs: Lithuanian Christmas songs and Lithuanian folk songs. The choir sang very well, although the selection of songs could have been more appreciated with one or two livelier songs. The Academy dance ensemble of a dozen girls gave two numbers, a stylized "Suktinis" and an interpretation of a well-known folk song. The children's Group portrayed a Christmas fantasy of a Christmas which might have been sad for two little boys in a DP camp or in present day Lithuania, but which became joyous by the appearance of good angels carrying gifts which were then shared with little friends. The children were attractively costumed in angels' robes and in Lithuanian costumes. The scene ended in a lively Lithuanian dance by the youngsters The Academy and children's group dancing had been coached by Miss Aldona Valeisa, former DP and fine interpretive dancer. Mrs. Dauzvardis explained the numbers and narrated Lithuanian Christmas customs.

The evening programs at 7:30 and 9 p.m. were given by the Ateitis Dancers with the assistance of members of the Lithuanian University Club. The audience was